

"Victor/Victoria" role is a dream come true for Duxbury native

By R. Scott Reedy
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When performer Christine Ciccone plays Boston's Colonial Theatre later this month in the musical "Victor/Victoria," it will be more than just another stop on a 40-week national tour. For the Duxbury native, it will be the realization of a dream.

"Just about eight years ago, shortly after reading the Victor Hugo novel, I saw the musical version of 'Les Misérables.' I became almost obsessed with the show and, in turn, very interested in musical theater," Ciccone explains. "It's so bizarre for me to even imagine performing at the Colonial. It will be very exciting to perform in Boston with this show."

As part of the "Victor/Victoria" ensemble, Ciccone plays a variety of small roles including Madame Roget, the chambermaid, and a reporter in the stage adaptation of the Academy Award-winning 1982 film of the same name which starred Julie Andrews.

With music by the late Henry Mancini, lyrics by Leslie Bricusse, and a book by Blake Edwards, "Victor/Victoria" is the story of a down-on-her-luck singer, Victoria Grant (Toni Tennille of the 1970s pop music duo "The Captain & Tennille"), who pretends to be a man pretending to be a woman in order to jump-start her lagging career. Masquerading as a man, Victoria soon becomes a sensation on the sophisticated supper club circuit of Paris in the 1930s, much to the delight of her gay mentor, and the confusion of an American admirer.



Christine Ciccone

Ciccone's own interest in performing is no charade. A 1993 graduate of Duxbury High School, she began studying ballet as a young girl with the former Children's Ballet Workshop in Hingham and various Boston Ballet youth programs. At age 15, she spent a summer in New York at George Balanchine's School of American Ballet. Ciccone also

danced in the Boston Ballet's acclaimed production of "The Nutcracker" for five years at The Wang Center for the Performing Arts.

After years of ballet training, Ciccone's career aspirations changed six years ago when she spent a summer in a musical theater program at Pittsburgh's Carnegie

Mellon University. "It was after that experience that I decided to focus on theater, not ballet," Ciccone recalled recently by telephone from Florida. "I knew I wasn't really ready for the intense level of competition in the professional ballet world. Where I really feel most comfortable is singing and acting."

While a high school senior in 1992, Ciccone got to do both in a production of "The Sound of Music" at The Company Theatre in Norwell. "That was my first big role and everyone at Company was really great to me. It was a tremendous experience that I will never forget."

While majoring in theater at Northwestern University in Chicago, Ciccone did an apprenticeship at The Williamstown Theatre Festival and spent a summer abroad at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts in England. Following her 1997 college graduation, the aspiring performer did what so many of her peers before her have done — she sublet an apartment in New York City and took waitressing jobs to pay her bills. This spring she was cast in "Victor/Victoria," which began its tour in August following a lengthy run on Broadway.

The challenges of a national tour are considerable, even to an eager young performer. "It's very hard being on the road, living out of a suitcase and moving to a new city just about every week. You get to know theaters, not cities when you're doing eight shows a week. It is great, though, to see how differently audiences in each city react to different things in the show. What I'm really happy about, however, is that we have some days off just

before Boston, so I'll be home for Christmas. Duxbury holds so many memories for me. It's a great place to spend the holidays."

Ciccone's parents, Mark and Eileen, and younger sisters Caroline, 15, Michelle, 13, and Amanda, 11, will be leading the applause here. "When we play Boston, there will definitely be a large Duxbury contingent on hand for at least one performance," Ciccone says.

It will be a return visit to the show for many of them. "I understudy the role of Norma (played by Lesley Ann Warren on film and Rachel York on Broadway) and I got to go on in that part four times in Miami. That was really the pinnacle of my career so far, and what made it even better was that my mother was able to be at one of those performances. Both my parents have also seen the show in Seattle. One of my grandmothers, Blanche Keeney, lives in Long Island, NY, and has come to see us on the road. My other grandmother, Florence Ciccone of Cleveland, has seen it six times so far in Seattle, Pittsburgh and Miami. I call her my unofficial fan club president."

("Victor/Victoria" will be at the Colonial Theatre, 106 Boylston Street, Boston, from December 29, 1998 through January 10, 1999. For tickets and information, visit the Colonial box office, or call 617/931-2787. Tickets to "Victor/Victoria" are also available through "Broadway in Boston" discount subscription and membership programs. For more information, call 617/880-2400.)